

“MANY HAPPY RETURNS”
of
IVOR NOVELLO (1893-1951)

THE STORY OF SOME OF HIS MANY EVIDENTIAL
COMMUNICATIONS FROM HIS NEW WORLD AS GIVEN
TO
DON GALLOWAY

A CENTURY TRIBUTE 16th JANUARY 1993

Dedicated with much love to Gee Sumeray

The author wishes to express his sincere gratitude to all those of both Worlds, named herein, for their ready cooperation, to Psychic News for agreement to quote therefrom, and especially to Ivor Novello for his unique friendship.

Also warmest thanks are offered to the President and Council of The London Spiritual Mission, Pembridge Place, London W2, for kindly permitting use of the Church for the Centenary Celebration for Ivor

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and to soloists Ava June and Don Harris, medium Ivy Scott and organist Vivian Craggs, my deepest appreciation for their kindness in donating their services for this occasion.

“MANY HAPPY RETURNS”

From any public library can be drawn several books on the life and work of writer-composer-actor-manager Ivor Novello – born David Ivor Davies on the 15th January 1893, in Cardiff.

This story, however, is rather different to the rest – telling us something of the life, work and interests of Ivor Novello in the World of Spirit. The religious movement known as Spiritualism has never enjoyed the fullest understanding of the public at large and, to a great many, it still appears to be something shadowy and, perhaps, peculiar. Yet there is nothing peculiar about the fact – well enough proven over the last century and a half, and never capable of being disproven – that we are Spirit here and now and that the soul-consciousness we call personality, the non-physical part of our human chemistry, lives on beyond the bounds of physical, bodily death.

Ivor Novello never called himself a Spiritualist but he had ample proofs of Spirit Reality during his lifetime and, since taking his Transition into that World of finer vibrations, has proven countless times his enjoyment of being able to communicate and work with earthly minds.

Never was it my personal pleasure to meet this great man – known as the ‘Uncrowned King of the British Musical Stage’ – but I came very close to so doing when a dear friend, Constance Crossland, who, for many years was a leading drama coach training many who have since become famous actors and actresses, told me she had managed to arrange for me to meet Mr. Novello in London when he returned from Jamaica, where he was currently on a month’s holiday. He was to return to the leading part in his latest great musical “Kings Rhapsody” and my scheduled meeting was to take tea with him on the 15th March, 1951, at the age of fifty-eight.

In those youthful days I was an avid theatre-goer and, amongst musical shows, my great favourites were those of Ivor Novello, hence my friend Constance thinking it would be quite a thrill for me to meet him.

Nevertheless, over the years and frequently in quite unusual ways, I was to meet all of his regular leading stars, all of whom – without exception – were utterly charming to me and in very natural rather than ‘highly theatrical’ ways, so I consider myself very privileged. Although I left my home in Leeds in 1952 to ‘find my way in the world’, it was not until the end of summer 1953 that I decided to try a life lived in London and took my first private bachelor home in Kensington.

At that time, I was quite accustomed to experiences of the Spirit People, seeing and hearing them most distinctly – and with incredibly

accurate ‘messages’ from them – since a small boy, but I had only attended four meetings at which mediums demonstrated their abilities in public.

My elder sister was, at that time, rather more interested than myself in exactly what Spiritualism was about, and suggested that as I was now living in London, I could attend all the large meetings and report back to her on ‘the really great and famous mediums’ etc. The first occasion I gave in to this request was on a Sunday evening in autumn 1953, attending a meeting presented by the Marylebone Spiritualist Association (later to become the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain) when the demonstrating medium was a veteran, Mrs. Bertha Harris. A superb medium, Mrs. Harris was very direct, straight to the point and could be very impatient with people dithering over their answers when she asked if they understood the messages she was delivering. Internationally famous, Mrs. Harris was one of the finest ambassadors for the Spirit Truth until she was well into her eighties. Being somewhat reserved in my younger days, on entering a packed meeting hall, I searched to find a spare seat where I might be able to half hide behind someone else so that perhaps I might not be ‘picked upon’ for a message! Useless! Having given three highly evidential messages, Mrs. Harris then pointed in my direction and declared “I want to speak with the young man down there, in the fourth row, with his head bowed.” The ‘young man’ shuffled in his seat to hide himself better and gave no response.

Mrs. Harris became rather cross (and a great many years later, when becoming friends, we shared a laugh about this). “Young man, I have a job to do, so please answer up to me and let me get on with my job. Do you or do you not come from Yorkshire?” (Yes) “Well I have with me Ivor Novello and he is very interested in you and your career and he tells me that you have some associations with the theatre and are here, living in London, to work here.” (Yes)

“He tells me you have had many experiences of Spirit, but your finest piece of evidential proof has been only very recent.” (Yes) “Now he says he will always be interested in helping you and the evidence you have had should be sufficient inspiration for you to get on with the work mediumistically. He says you will have greater proof yet – Ivor says he has met up with the Chinese Gentleman in Spirit who guides and teaches you. You will have many fine proofs right in your own home, and Mr. Novello says he too will come frequently to help steer you through the very circuitous road ahead of you.”

Mrs. Harris then said Ivor was referring to friends of mine whom he had met when on Earth and correctly said they had told me about their meetings with him. Also, Ivor was relating details of some of his ‘stars’ whom he had seen me become acquainted with and said that I would not

be long in my present apartment and I would have excellent proof from him that he would be 'moving with me' when I took on a new place in March. (All proven correct)

Never could Mrs. Harris have been in finer mediumistic form and I was delighted when, years later, we were to become friends. (Other references to Ivor's communications are published in my book of 1974 'Inevitable Journey'.

Moving to Westminster in March 1954, I had a somewhat unusual request during a telephone conversation with a gentleman named Gil Dewhurst, who was then a literary agent and a mutual friend of a theatrical producer I had known in my days in Leeds. For whatever reasons, Gil said he had always wanted to meet me (I couldn't think why, and never did really understand why) and wondered if he might be invited to visit. He came the following Sunday for afternoon tea, but stayed on through to supper and, even then, still onward until 1 a.m., the pair of us finding many areas of mutual interest, not least in matters psychic. In the latter regard, I was somewhat taken aback when, glancing across the room just beyond Gil's chair, I saw the unmistakable presence of Ivor Novello. He seemed to laugh at my sense of shock but then told me I had to 'help' Gil. Explaining that he perceived Gil to have a bad stomach ulcer, Ivor said, "Tell him he has an ulcer – this will be proven within days – he must not be afraid. It is not a cancer in the stomach as he has been imagining." Questioning Gil, I was shocked to learn that this was exactly what he had been thinking and he was due to go for the results of some recent x-rays the following Thursday! Ivor then told of knowing that Gil was going to meet a David at Wimbledon on the Monday evening (confirmed by Gil) and that when he had seen Gil and this David speaking together the previous Friday, they had talked about me and the David had expressed the wish that he could visit me also. (Gil also confirmed this, saying that it referred to David Ash, another theatrical producer, whom I had met briefly a couple of times in Yorkshire) Giving Gil some advice on a particularly tricky bit of business he was currently wrestling with at his office, Ivor was proven to be accurate again as Gil followed his advice through.

Perhaps my greater shock was to come the following evening when, after I had dined and cleared the crockery away, I returned to the living room only to find Ivor standing there, arms crossed, and demanding to know "Well, where's the typewriter? When are we going to start? I'm waiting you know..."

I had been so bewildered thinking back on all Ivor's utterances for Gil that I had forgotten his message to me that Sunday evening "I would like to try and write with you – I want you to start a play with the words

‘Don’t worry Eve, everything will be alright’.” He gave me a very fine sounding title but when I enquired as to what should follow the first line, or what had to be the theme of the play, I was told rather sharply “All you need for now is the first line; get to your machine, type that line and the rest will follow.”

Suffice to say that, upon ‘trying’, I became almost bound to the typewriter and it travelled back and forth at such speed I thought sparks would come from it! By 2.30 in the morning there was an entire script for a three-act play and, along with others that followed over the months, it was consigned to a drawer in a large file where all have remained until this day! In the busyness of the years, there really has not been time to sort these scripts out, revise and polish them and bring them to what I would consider perfectly presentable order.

Many are the ways in which the Spirit People work and personally I have always found the purely spontaneous demonstrations of their closeness to be the most impressive. Ivor, speaking to me again in 1954, said that he would like to introduce me to an old friend of his, one of his former stars, Miss Ruby Miller – once also one of the most famous of the old ‘Gaiety Girls’ of Edwardian times. Ivor said, “By June 10th you will meet Ruby and there will be a real proof that I am behind the meeting – I shall tell her in advance also to expect it. It cannot be earlier because she has been very unwell and is resting privately in the country with friends.” The whole thing sounded rather strange to me and especially when Ivor went on to add, “I’ll prepare you for the meeting by impressing a friend to give you a single red rose. It will be your own first rose of the summer”, and he laughed.

Many weeks passed and I had almost forgotten this message but, on June 9th a friend who had been ill for some months, telephoned to suggest that, it being a particularly beautiful day, she wanted to venture into London’s West End for afternoon tea and could I meet her around four o’clock. I had known Joy for about a year but knew very little of her professional background since our main line of common interest was Spiritualism. As I sat down at the table where Joy awaited me, I was somewhat taken aback to have a long, slim package of tissue paper pushed over towards me as Joy said, “This is for you – I was watching the girls in the florists unpacking these and this one would not stay where she put it in the vase, but seemed to stand aloof from its counterparts and it somehow reminded me of you!”

The tissue paper contained a red rose! Naturally I then remembered Ivor’s message, and conveying it to Joy, was even more surprised when she told me, “Oh! I met him twice – I used to work for a close friend of his – and he was just charming. He was a very kind man y’know – in

your ways, you tend to be a bit like him. He used to care very much for those less well off and he helped people in so many thoughtful, unexpected ways – see what I mean?”

This then reminded me of a similar remark which had been made to me way back in 1953 by my friend in Leeds, Constance Crossland. After being Best Man at a friend’s Registry Office wedding one morning, as the wedding breakfast party dispersed I decided that I would call and see ‘Connie’ on the way home. A very psychic lady herself, she was nevertheless a very staunch Methodist with a vice-like grip on her Faith. However, this day was, for various personal reasons, one of her bleakest and sorely testing of that Faith. Delighted with the surprise of my call, Connie then apologized for the chill of the room but had just not been able to get the fire burning properly all day. Consequently, I took off my jacket, raked out the cinders, etc., and reset and lit the fire, which soon took hold splendidly. Meanwhile, Connie had insisted on going to make a tray of tea and as she returned to the drawing room, I was still bent down by the fireplace. Connie suddenly exclaimed, “Oh Donald, don’t move for a minute. Ivor Novello is standing right over you and smiling. He says, “Never mind the wedding suit, look at the lovely fire now”, and he laughs. He tells me he’s here trying to keep the appointment you missed with him in London and will always be interested in what you are doing, and what you are more capable of doing.”

It was miraculous that Connie did not drop the tea tray I thought, but then equally was it interesting that Ivor should appear to the very lady through whom the agreement was made for me to meet him in March of two years previous.

This incident alone provokes us with baffling thoughts as to just how much do we remember when once in the world of Spirit, and why do seemingly small and trivial things oft times get remembered more than what we might consider more important details? It might be said that Connie had long carried in her memory the thoughts of Ivor, but even then, considering the enormous trials she had endured in recent years, why should such a seemingly small thing take on such a potency of remembrance as to ‘conjure up’ the idea of Ivor Novello appearing in her drawing room, standing by a chap he has never known, who happens to be lighting a fire?

Connie expressed to me her belief that what Ivor was trying to convey was that (a) he wanted to see her ‘keeping the home fires burning’ (as his first successful song was entitled) and (b) that, in time, he would inspire my mind with his ideas and thoughts. People I have met over the years who knew Ivor well have frequently expressed the opinion that, not as a person of the theatre but just as a friend of the ordinary kind, my ways

and thoughts remind them much of Ivor. Who am I to agree or otherwise?

So then we have friend Joy saying a similar thing in June 1954! What to make of it I knew not, but it was the ninth of the month and that evening I was at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London's Coventry Street, talking to the Manager in the foyer when two very theatrical ladies walked in and he quickly excused himself of my company to go and meet them, ushering them quickly through to the Stalls. He was a little bit excited when he returned to me and told me that he had just welcomed 'the most famous Gaiety Girl, Ruby Miller, and her friend, the writer Evadne Price.

Of course I pricked up my ears and as my managerial friend said he was to entertain the ladies to drinks in the bar later, I (perhaps rudely) asked if I might join them since I wanted particularly to speak to Miss Miller.

Following instructions, I asked Miss Miller if she was feeling quite well again and if her stay with friends in the country had proven a real tonic, to which she answered affirmatively, but then posed the question, "But we are strangers – how could you know that I have been ill and staying in the country? Even some of my other friends don't know about all this." I explained the source of my information, adding that Ivor had definitely said I would meet Miss Miller before June 10th – and here we were on the 9th! I told also of the 'signal' of the red rose and then I was asked my name again. "Ah", said Miss Price, "D.G. Those are the initials Ivor gave us in our Circle the other week Ruby. Remember?"

Miss Miller enthused over this memory and told me Ivor had informed them he would be arranging a special meeting on a special date for them and a young man with the initials 'D.G.', this being his way again of proving to all of us that he knew where he was and what he was about in the Other World. Only weeks later did it suddenly occur to us that the 9th June, 1954 happened to be the thirtieth anniversary of the premier of Ivor's great straight play 'The Rat' – presented at the Prince of Wales Theatre.

For the non-Spiritualist readers of this material, it will be easy to say that all the foregoing amounts to nothing more than a string of funny coincidences. Yet is there really such a thing? I personally don't think so, and anyway would have to posit the question to that reader, how come though, these so-called 'coincidences' are foretold by someone of another world long before the events became reality in our earthly world? Surely there is a definite 'planning' involved here by those discarnate minds to impress upon the incarnate ones the fact of two-world linkage.

From that time on, whenever it came around to the anniversary of Ivor's passing to Spirit (6th March) and to his January birth date, I would

always have a red rose, or occasionally it has had to be a dark red carnation, in a single vase alongside a small framed drawing of him in my home. When, at those times, I have been away I have still endeavoured to keep up the gesture, and if for some reason I have not been so able, then always from some quite unexpected source have I been presented with a red rose myself. This has occurred in various parts of Britain and in America and Australia when I have been working there amongst people who knew nothing whatsoever about Ivor Novello and therefore were totally unaware of just whose mind had ‘impressed’ them to bring me the roses.

As recorded in my earlier book, Ivor kept making his presence known to me through other mediums and through certain social introductions throughout the late fifties and sixties – even though in 1963 I moved back to live in Yorkshire, returning to live in London in 1967 when I took up the position of General Secretary at the College of Psychic Studies. It was there that medium Trixie Allingham, talking to me casually in an office one afternoon, suddenly asked what connection I had with Mr. Novello. Saying only that I had had certain Communications from him over the years, I told her that I did not have any other direct connection with him at all in earthly life. “Well” said Mrs. Allingham, “He is here now and tells me that when you have finished with that desk, he will travel across the world to prove he is still interested in following you and your work. It will be a year or two yet, but he says, “You will go where I have been and I shall prove it all the way”.” This was to prove correct a few years later.

At the College I met one of its members, Mr. Nicholas Hart, who, in conversation one day, mentioned quite casually that his father was Dunstan Hart, one of the most famous actor-singers in Ivor’s great shows. Nick regaled me with stories about Ivor, remembered from his own childhood.

Another College member, Miss Smith-Scott, came in from Hertfordshire one afternoon with an enormous bunch of white lilac which I thought she wished us to use for the vases in the lecture hall but which, instead, she told me she “was impressed by Ivor Novello that morning to bring this for Donald for his office”. Enquiring if she was sure it was Ivor, I was told that Miss Smith-Scott had had many highly evidential communications from him through the years, and also from his mother, Clara Novello-Davies, in whose world-famous Ladies Choir Miss Smith-Scott’s aunt had been a singer years before! I believe white lilac was Ivor’s favourite blossom and indeed, at his funeral, his coffin was covered with it.

It was only through reading a rare old book in the College Library that I learned for the first time of Ivor's interest in mediumship beginning in 1923. In the book 'Memories of a Famous Clairvoyant', Mrs. A. E. Perriman records her first and many subsequent meetings with Ivor, when he wanted her to sit for him, through which sessions he received invaluable guidance about his shows, on personal matters and about investment interests. Of particular interest to me was the fact that Mrs. Perriman had lived in my home city of Leeds and it was there where she had had her first contact from Ivor requesting an appointment. Reading this then reminded me that in Leeds – barely the proverbial stone's throw from my original home – was a theatrical guest house named after Ivor – Novello House in Ladywood Road, Oakwood, but which I had never ever connected with Mr. IVOR Novello.

I am by no means an entertainer of any kind, therefore I was very surprised when a friend in London – an old Vaudeville artiste – asked me if I would try and help him out by joining the cast for a pre-Christmas Concert at a hospital in south London. Protesting that I was not talented in the ways of entertaining, I allowed myself to be persuaded that I had a decent enough voice to 'put over a song or two' and that I was capable of 'telling a few nice, light jokes'! My friend had organised this annual concert over many years out of gratitude for the hospital's years of care for an old relative, and so I was reluctant to refuse outright and thus let him down. A dreadful epidemic of 'flu had taken out of his proposed cast several of the professional colleagues he had usually been able to rely upon and he was in a very sorry plight. So I agreed.

I hardly slept the night before my promotion as an entertainer, but in the early hours I was disturbed from my mere drowsing, by a sudden hard knock on the bedroom door. Sitting up with a shock, I was amazed to find Ivor standing just inside the doorway, telling me that I had, "No need to worry – you'll get through better than you expect. I shall be there with you and, in an unusual way, I shall prove it. They have a good instrument there and you will sing well to it, believe me..." With that he was 'gone'.

The concert was very well received, even my own contribution, and when the hospital Matron and Senior Sister thanked us, during a light supper afterwards, I happened to comment on what a beautiful tone there was to their baby-grand piano. "Oh yes", said the Matron, "It's a very special piano to us – it belonged to Mr. Ivor Novello and was left to us by him a few years ago." It was indeed 'a good instrument' they had there.

Despite the success of the concert, I was not convinced I would ever become top of the hit parade in Kuala Lumpur, or that I really had the special talents to become a good performer.

A Mrs. King wrote to me from Faversham telling me that, while at first puzzled as to why, in mediumistic demonstrations, she had received messages through mediums purporting to be from Ivor, expressing his interest in helping her grand-daughter with her musical studies at College, she later came to remember that years before, her brother-in-law had worked for Ivor and had communicated from Spirit that they had linked up together again in the Spirit World. Mrs. King told me that, apart from the issues of interest in her grand-daughter, Ivor – as well as her brother-in-law – had managed to give some quite astonishing details of things which no one else but she could have known.

Mr. J. N. McAndrew wrote to me from Edinburgh relating the story of how he had received ‘communications’ from Ivor through two Scottish mediums, Mrs. Jean Thompson and Mrs. Mary Kidd. Ivor had referred to Mr. McAndrew being remembered as a youth, training at the hotel where Ivor stayed, being scared in case he (Mr. McAndrew) made any mistakes whilst serving the famous actor-composer. He told also of his uncle, a former maître d’ at the hotel, who had served Ivor many times there, and how he brought Ivor through, Ivor stating that he was pleased to be ‘in service’ himself now from the Other Side, especially where service was required to inspire and strengthen potential fine young actors and actresses just making their way in the theatre. Mr. McAndrew categorically stated that, through both mediums, Ivor referred to many personal matters relating to his family and that of his uncle, some facts the recipient having to go and check out for proof with his widowed aunt.

A Mr. Peter Adams told of being a stagehand at the time of the run of Ivor’s great show ‘Perchance to Dream’ and how, having sustained a bad accident whilst moving some scenery backstage, Mr. Adams had been laid off from work for several weeks. Wages being very low in those times, Ivor had enquired several times of the stagehand’s progress towards recovery and kindly sent him a cheque which helped him through tremendously during those hard times. Mr. Adams said that whilst visiting friends in Bristol, he had been persuaded to go to a Spiritualist meeting where Ivor Novello came through the medium with a message for him. Peter had regretted being unable to attend Ivor’s funeral, remaining always very grateful for the help he had received in earlier years. Now Ivor’s message was that he, “Knew you couldn’t make it, but it mattered not – I knew your kind thoughts were with me then – and now – and that is what really matters.” Mr. Peter Adams swore that his Bristolian friends knew nothing of his work in earlier years in connection with London theatres, and certainly nothing of any slight link with Ivor.

Another gentleman, who asked not to have his name published, told in a letter of how he had been a waiter years ago at London’s famous

theatrical venue, the Ivy Restaurant. Planning to leave service there, this gentleman told me that two nights before his departure from the Ivy was due, he was awakened in the middle of the night and saw Ivor Novello standing at the foot of his bed saying, “You won’t leave you know – and furthermore, you shouldn’t. Tomorrow will see quite a change – don’t be foolish or stubborn – go along with what is suggested.”

The gentleman had apparently served Ivor several times through the years and they had become almost like social friends. The day after this unusual experience for a gentleman who claimed he was not psychic and had never had anything like it happen previously, the Ivy management asked him to stay on, with the promise of a little extra money for a while, and a further increase six months later, by which time certain other staff changes would have been effected. The gentleman had stayed several years thereafter, as he says, “Doing much better for myself, thanks to Ivor.”

A theatrically associated young lady whom I had met briefly two or three times in the late fifties, Jean Lincoln, telephoned me quite ‘out of the blue’ one evening in 1959 to ask, “Do you believe in things like Spirits – and mediums?” and of course I replied that I did indeed! “Well, I have had an uncanny thing happen, Don.” Jean continued. “I went with some friends to a sort of séance – five of us sat with this medium lady (I was later to learn it was a fine medium called Ethel Moss who worked for the SAGB) and she told me some amazing things and then spoke about messages from relatives I’d never even heard of and afterwards had to check out with my mother, all proving absolutely right. Then she spoke about an actor-musician called Ivor Novello and said he had a message for Don. Well, after a bit of a struggle to get it right, it turned out you are the Don in question and the message is simply, “Tell him not to be so worried – his work IS going to change very soon and he will be surrounded with music, he’ll work with someone I once knew, and he will understand why I am so interested in the place where he will work. Remind him I tried to get this message through a long time ago – that I DO walk with him many times – remind him of Patsy, and Chester, and he’ll remember.”

The whole thing was quite a puzzle but in a few weeks the message he had given to Jean about her working with a famous star came to prove absolutely correct. Taking a job as Personal Secretary, Jean’s life changed dramatically, travelling with the star all over the globe. But sadly, Jean was to perish physically in a tragic motor accident a few short years later.

Before the year was out I commenced work with Chappells, the music and piano company in Bond Street, and a close colleague in my particular department was a fellow who had worked in many of Ivor’s shows in the

corps de ballet. Of course Ivor was interested in 'the place' for this company published all his music and, I believe, still does. The reference to Patsy made me think back to when I had been persuaded by a dear actress friend – Patricia Haines – to attend a Spiritualist meeting with her in Chester in 1952. The medium gave us both 'messages' but without names attached to the Communicators, despite managing to give very detailed descriptions of their appearance. From the details given, Patsy was able to clearly identify two old relatives and I was easily able to identify my mother's uncle who had been a professional pianist. However, at that time I could not identify the other 'gentleman', also musical, not passed over more than a year or so, very handsome man, elegantly dressed, etc., and who said he was grateful for my appreciation of his life and work. The medium conveyed the idea that this 'gentleman' could have been very famous but she did not know his name. Only that he was saying he would constantly be proving his friendship to me from the Other Side. Until the telephone call from Jean Lincoln, I had never connected Ivor with the message in Chester seven years previously.

Writing to me from Hampshire, Mrs. Iris Terry told me that she and her (late) husband had been to many Spiritualist meetings when they had lived in Torquay, and then in Bournemouth – both places being where they had run their own private hotels. They had met Ivor Novello in Bournemouth on a few occasions through mutual friends who knew him very well. Since going into Spirit, Ivor had communicated many times and on one memorable occasion when they had extended the hotel and were just a little concerned as to how long it would take to recoup their expenditure, Ivor had suggested, through a medium, that they, "Put a nice baby grand in the restaurant and do afternoon teas with some gentle background music and it will boost trade well with the local residents, not just relying on holiday guests." Mrs. Terry told me how amusing it was to them that, following through this idea, they found the local residents became almost jealous of having their 'own' places in the restaurant for these afternoons and anyone else had to 'take pot luck' on getting a table!

As stated earlier, Ivor never claimed to be a Spiritualist but, as a Psychic News report a few years ago reminded us, he was present at a remarkable séance in 1925 with the then brilliant medium, George Valiante, when an old friend made direct contact through the trumpet (that used in what are known as direct-voice séances). The communicator gave his name as Bertie Austin and shared remembrances with Ivor of mutual friends back in Toronto years before.

This proof of Spirit Communication caused Ivor to declare, "This has been the greatest day of my life." Ivor became more interested in the

psychic scene and it was through another voice-medium, Leslie Flint, that a message came for Ivor from his mother Clara. Ivor was not present at this séance, but his mother conveyed the idea that his next show, now almost complete, should be called 'Perchance to Dream', Ivor at that point never having mentioned to anyone what he had decided to call this new show. Whilst it may be said that, to a certain degree, there was a slight psychic element running through most of Ivor's musical plays, 'Perchance to Dream' was unquestionably the one where the psychic element could not possibly be mistaken.

In the forties and early fifties, Ivor had opened his apartment in the Aldwych, London, to an excellent medium of that time, Ronald Strong, to give private sittings to friends, and it was this medium I heard demonstrating in early 1954 at the Wigmore Hall, London, giving superb evidence to many people and a very striking message from Ivor to a friend of his in the audience.

A very dear friend, Enid Fleming, who was one of the Council Members of the College of Psychic Studies, told me that in earlier years, she had worked for the BBC and had met Ivor Novello only a couple of times yet had received very interesting and evidential messages from him through various mediums with whom she had sat. Coming into the College for a monthly Council Meeting one day, 'Ming' related her experience with a medium she had seen that morning and that Ivor had made contact with a message for her and one for me. "Tell Don I know all about Cinderella and the picture – and it's splendid. I am very happy about that. Tell him I shall still periodically come to his home and, in time to come, I think I shall get him into my old home too."

Frankly, the message did not mean very much at that moment, but several weeks later I visited friends I had not had an opportunity of seeing for some months. Retired antique dealers, they were about to move to a new, and smaller, house and had been disposing of many treasures for which they would no longer have room. Offering me a small parcel, they said simply, "We thought that this was something that would appeal to you and it will always be a remembrance of us and of someone else you think a great deal about."

What a delightful gift was the small gilt-framed picture of the story of Cinderella (depicting the scene of Prince trying the glass slipper onto Cinderella's foot) and my friends told me they had purchased this many years before when they had attended the sale of many of the treasures of Ivor Novello's former country home, Redroofs, near Maidenhead! Like many things purchased at such auctions, this picture had been stored away because they did not have room to display it. The message from Ivor, through friend 'Ming', proved itself valid after all.

Famous medium Ena Twigg arrived early at the College one evening, with a good half-hour to spare before delivering her planned lecture and, sitting with me in the office, she quite suddenly told me that Ivor was close by and was simply asking her to wish me Happy Birthday. I see no reason why Mrs. Twigg, or any of our College mediums, could have known that my birthday was to be the next day. Ena gave quite a few details of some of my past experience with Ivor, of which he was reminding her, and almost all of which I had never then discussed with friends around the College. The following day, the College's then longest-serving medium, Elizabeth Bedford, whose clientele for years had embraced about a quarter of the British and European aristocracy, told me that just before going to sleep the previous night, she had been strongly impressed to wish me Happy Birthday – by Ivor Novello! Elizabeth then told me that two of her sitters of many years were relatives of Ivor and he had communicated through her many times.

That was my fortieth birthday and when I arrived home from the College that evening, my good neighbours brought me a bunch of red roses which had been delivered that day but which had no card attached to them. To this day I have not discovered who sent those roses – but I have a pretty good idea which Spirit Mind impressed the idea on some kind soul of this Earth.

It was in 1970 that a good friend, Derek Keller, asked me to give a private sitting one evening to a lady friend of his who was in a rather distressed and perplexed state at that time. Normally I did not give private sittings unless, once in a while, with a friend visiting socially I might suddenly be impressed so to do. Because Derek had received Spirit help via my own efforts as well as those of other mediums he knew, he felt that I was the one best able to help his friend.

Announcing herself simply as 'Wendy', this delightful and attractive young lady settled herself into a chair in my small sitting room and, once we had relaxed, the sitting commenced. The death of her father some time before had bereaved her deeply and now she was having to help her mother run the family hotel in north London, but desperately wanting to get on with a real theatrical career for herself. Evidences poured forth from her father and others in Spirit, and afterwards we had a most enjoyable chat and a good few laughs together, Wendy actually being a very witty and funny companion. We became good friends thereafter, and after my resignation from the college in 1971, preparing to commit myself to full-time freelance mediumship, I was invited by Wendy to visit her home for one whole day every few months, and there to give private sittings to her various friends, most of them actors and actresses.

Wendy herself received a lot of guidance from Spirit, even though her real work was still to be fairly spasmodic for quite a long time. Unfortunately, the area in which Wendy ignored Spirit Guidance was in the matter of the emotions, in consequence of which she made two very disastrous marriages. It was to be several years before she was finally to find 'Mr. Right' and settle into the happy partnership that now exists.

On one occasion Wendy received communication from Ivor Novello in which Wendy was told that, after some time without work, she would be given a special offer for a short theatrical tour and must prepare herself to 'go back on the boards' and forget about television for a while. This did not altogether please her but Ivor insisted she must get more of this kind of experience because it would bring her forward again in both the public and show business eye. Ivor gave the initials of the towns she would visit on the tour, all smaller towns in the north of England, and said the offer would come quickly and via a new production company on whose letterhead would be the symbol of a trident. He insisted that, as a proof of the value of what he was suggesting to her, she should take notice of where this new company's offices were.

A few days later Wendy telephoned me, very excitedly reporting that her agent had an offer in hand for her and she must go and see the production people (gentlemen whose initials Ivor had also given by the way) at their offices in what used to be Ivor Novello's flat in Aldwych! Only then was Wendy to find the company was called Trident Productions – the trident being printed on their letterheading!

Insistent that, by following this through, Wendy would eventually become a star name in countless households, getting better offers of work than ever before, he has been proven correct of course. At the time, Wendy was still somewhat skeptical. Doubtless, after a long period of indifferent work offers, and phases with none at all, it was natural for her not to become too elated just on the strength of a medium's and Spirit communicator's words alone. However, within another twelve months, her stage tour over, Wendy was quickly lined up for television and over the years – apart from major summer shows at seaside resorts and pantomimes – Wendy has established herself in the front line of television series, notably 'Are You Being Served', 'Grace And Favour' and, of course, 'Eastenders', whilst at the same time making frequent guest appearances on both television and radio programmes of different kinds.

Other young budding actors and actresses have also received Ivor's assistance, as have musicians and writers from time to time. Let us now look at the experiences of someone Ivor has inspired in her music, sufficiently to bring her many awards – Miss Georgina Brazier-Potter, AMusVCM (Hons).

MEDIUMSHIP TO MUSIC

Winning a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music as a ten year old, Georgina Brazier-Potter became particularly interested in music theory, eventually becoming an Honours Associate in this subject, and this, no doubt was what first brought her round to attempting composition.

Over the years, with many Music Festival accolades to her credit, Georgina very proudly tells of the remarkable flows of inspiration she has had from Ivor Novello, although not having been especially interested in his work when he was in the physical world.

There are those known as ‘musical mediums’; gifted sensitives who find they can write music under the inspirational thought-flow of influencing minds of great composers now of the Higher World. Perhaps Rosemary Brown of London was the most famous of such gifted people. Similarly has Georgina become a ‘musical medium’, mainly receiving her periodic – mostly spontaneous – ‘impressions’ from the mind of Ivor Novello.

“When, in the early seventies, I was working on my ‘Hampstead Heath’ chamber music works” writes Georgina, “I felt strangely impressed to get hold of Ivor’s musical score of his show ‘Careless Rapture’ from the library. Not knowing this show from first hand experience, I was astonished to find it contained a fairground scene set on Hampstead Heath! Comparing the music for this scene with my own composition, I found there were similar note patterns and that I had used the same unusual and consecutive ‘time signatures’ of four followed by three-eight time, as had Ivor. It was much later that I realized he alone must have put these musical sequences into my mind and also to get the score of his show from the library. As I have become more psychically aware over the years, Ivor now ‘drops thoughts and ideas’ into my mind, pointing out just whereabouts in my own music to look for his excerpts and where they come from in his – this being after I have finished a composition!”

“‘Hampstead Heath’, incidentally, won the Hurlestone-Yeates Trophy for Chamber Music, and some years later, in a private sitting with London medium Lee Lacy, Ivor communicated, saying that the award had a spelling mistake in it. Although the award hangs on the wall directly above my piano, I had never previously noticed that Ivor was correct – the second ‘e’ was missing from the name ‘Yeates’.

“Never easily convinced of matters concerning a Spirit World, and certainly not of someone like Ivor taking an interest in me and my work, I have found him to employ some very unusual ways of doing away with my skepticism of the early days. Eventually coming to learn that Ivor

was personally very interested in psychic matters, I have since felt that this would be why, in several shows, we saw a psychic link – his ‘Ghosts of Gentry Castle’ in the show ‘Crest of a Wave’; the phantom court scene in ‘Arc de Triomphe’; and his reincarnation theme in ‘Perchance to Dream’.”

Minuet and Trio piece ‘Fenton House’ was Georgina’s composition depicting the 17th century and oldest house in Hampstead, now housing a collection of early keyboard instruments. In this piece is a curious parallel with Ivor’s first successful song ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning’. Georgina says, “I read somewhere that Ivor always put just a few notes from ‘Home Fires’ into his other compositions ‘just for luck’. On reading this, I was ‘told’ to look back at my ‘Fenton House’ score.” To her amazement she then found that her composition begins with three consecutive ascending notes, G, A, B, and then it was realized that ‘Home Fires’ opens in the same way (i.e. A, B, C,). Ivor used this ‘motif’ in the song ten times and Georgina had used it nine times in the Minuet and Trio in various guises. Perhaps this suggests that Ivor’s first interest in her music commenced in 1965 when ‘Fenton House’ was written.

Only in 1985 did Georgina see a touring revival of Ivor’s show ‘Perchance to Dream’ and was very taken with the ‘Meeting (love) Theme’ which links the scenes. “Afterwards I was impressed to get the score of this show from the library” says Georgina “and it was a while before I had a chance to really study it. Whilst doing so, Ivor told me to also look at my own ‘Menwood House’ music which features the old stately home at Hampstead (quite a parallel there with ‘Perchance to Dream’ set in a stately home called ‘Huntersmoon’). I found that in the Introduction and Nocturne I had used the opening of the ‘Meeting Theme’ with its similar running quaver accompaniment in bass. This is one of Ivor’s more obvious insertions, although he introduces the theme again later in a more condensed version. ‘Kenwood House’ won the Hurlestone-Yeates Trophy again for me.”

Georgina then writes very kindly to tell me of a very evidential sitting she had with me in October 1986, in the course of which had been described ‘a man using a quill pen, showing pieces of old music into which he appeared to be inserting new music’. Describing the man as wearing an old fashioned outfit, I had said that the man was not showing his face, appearing to use a mask. It was strange to me at first, but then the mask was removed and it was Ivor (Ivor had worn a mask in ‘Perchance to Dream’). Georgina says, “In a previous sitting with Kentish medium Ruth Phillips, Ivor had also appeared in this costume and was writing music as if with a quill pen. He is very good insofar as often using a second medium to confirm something he has related through another one previously – this giving additional proof to his

purposes. Don had also mentioned Ivor with the Prince of Wales feathers and, shortly afterwards, I visited the actors' Church, St. Paul's, Covent Garden, where there is a plaque commemorating Ivor and my attention was drawn to another large plaque in nearby King Street, which bore the Prince of Wales feathers." (As recently as October 1991 Ivor again mentioned the Prince of Wales feathers in a sitting with Linda Williamson)

Georgina also tells that, "Two days prior to my 1986 sitting with Don, I had been sorting through newspaper cuttings, etc., for my scrapbook on Ivor, and Don told me about this, saying Ivor had been watching me at that time, being often around my flat. To show something of his sense of humour, Ivor had also said, "You don't have much luck with your tulips do you?" To which I replied, "No, they all had blackfly so I had to pull them up."

Having mentioned tulips the previous spring, Ivor now said, "I don't want to be branded a liar so you get some more and leave them to me – I will make them come up." The result was a magnificent display of tulips the following spring, much admired by everyone who saw it in all its glory. "Various other things coming through in Don's sitting were of a more personal nature, something with a certain forevision all coming to pass in time, as had been said, some happening very quickly, others taking a little longer – as is sometimes the way the Spirit World works with their denser notion of clock and calendar time in the earthly world" added Georgina.

Writing again, our musical-medium friend shares one more of her many fine experiences of evidence of Ivor's influence in her life and work. "A few years ago", Georgina tells us, "Ivor told me he wanted some variations written on his Chinese Temple Theme from the show 'Careless Rapture' – a theme of which he was particularly fond and one which he now felt could do with another arrangement – this to be a Pibroch (Scottish lament). I then remembered that some time earlier, Ruth Phillips had sent me a short pipe theme (this being a postal reading) the melody of which Ivor had said was to be used in some variations. When I played it over, it lent itself beautifully to the rhythm of the Pibroch with its oddly dotted notes. I used Ivor's pipe theme to introduce the Pibroch and Ivor then gave me a second pipe theme at the piano for the finish of it. Later on I discovered that he himself wrote two pipe tunes for the film 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' in which he starred."

Spirit work in many ways to give us not only identifying proof of who they are, but also in the form of symbolic signs when they wish to convey their closeness, oftimes in our everyday lives. For Georgina, the ultimate proof for her of Ivor's interest and help came when, in a private sitting with psychic artist Carole Polge, the medium drew Ivor's portrait,

knowing nothing whatsoever about Georgina, nor who or what she was by way of profession.

“I always thoroughly research everything I am given in a sitting with any medium – as much for their sake as my own – never taking anything at face value, but eventually letting mediums know, where possible, the outcome of their work and its value in my life”, writes Georgina. “I am not a practicing medium”, she adds, “It is a gift which has come naturally to me over a period of many years and I feel extremely privileged to have gained in such a manner of this process, the help and friendship of Ivor Novello. I would like also to thank with fullest appreciation, the aforementioned mediums for the support they have given me along the way.”

Georgina has told me recently (October 1992) of wishing to donate a white rose bush to each of the following, to commemorate his Centenary – one to the Actors’ Church garden in London, one for the garden of Ivor’s old country house, Redroofs, near Maidenhead, one for Novello House, a Guest house at Rounday, Leeds, one for the garden of her best friend’s brother and one for my own cottage – each bush to be accompanied by a suitable plaque as a Salute to Ivor. I feel deeply honoured to be one included in this beautiful gesture, and now am no longer puzzled as to why two colleagues, in recent months, have spontaneously declared that they have seen a ‘Spirit gentleman offering you white roses’.

With many literary, as well as musical awards to her credit, Miss Brazier-Potter could fill an entire volume just with her record of remarkable and highly evidential communications from Ivor Novello.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Although it was in the mid-seventies, when I had just started presenting the first of what eventually amounted to thirty-odd weeklong seminars at the Arthur Findlay College, Stansted, that I met a charming and highly entertaining lady from Bournemouth, Mrs. Muriel Strickland. I had to wait some years before I learned she had been a friend of Ivor, and to her do I owe the knowledge that it was on his 36th birthday – 15th January 1929 – that Ivor changed his name legally from David Ivor Davies to Ivor Novello. Muriel also informed me of how strange it was that, during his last holiday in his beloved home in Jamaica, Ivor had several photographs taken with his gathering of friends there, but when they were developed, two of them clearly showed the entire group – except for Ivor! Apparently, travelling home by aircraft, Ivor requested of his dear friend, and star, Olive Gilbert, that “when I have passed from this world, do please pray for me – and I’ll try to always be around to help you” – rather as if he ‘knew’ he was soon to be journeying on.

Many are they who have had ‘premonitions’, as the inner feelings are usually called, about having only a short time left in the earthly world, but very few indeed have the knowledge that Ivor had of a continuance of life in another dimension.

Similarly, one could safely say that only the most serious minded enquirers in the psychic field know that the Spirit Friends use many diverse ways to prove their reality and their linking with this world, bringing their interest to bear on many aspects of our own daily lives. Sometimes, in giving prophetic utterances, They will give us a ‘signal’ or ‘signpost’ to watch out for, indicating their special interest in some incident that is yet ahead of us. This can often be to encourage us to take special notice of what experience we are having. But sometimes for no other reason than to let us know they are there, are sharing, and that they are fully aware of the reason for us being in certain places and situations at certain times.

In 1965 I had been invited to speak at a Spiritualist Church in Lincolnshire, this allowing me the chance to also spend a few days with especially dear friends there. During my visit I was invited to go with my hostess to another friend’s home for morning coffee – her friends being people I had met only once previously. The man of the house was a famous surgeon, his wife a beautiful lady in every sense of the phrase, and their home was a quite enchanting early Queen Anne house in delightful grounds. They had a little experience of the Truths of Spiritualism but were not actually Spiritualists in a committed sense. During the conversation, which was of a very general social nature, I

suddenly became aware of Ivor standing by the grand piano in the drawing room and then remembered that, a few days before, he had told me he would be coming with me on this visit and would prove it! After I while I ventured to ask my hostess if she and/or her husband were interested in the music and shows of Ivor Novello. “Oh, very much” said the lady. “We never missed an Ivor show, ever. It’s funny you should ask this just now though, because before you arrived this morning I was entertaining myself at the piano with some of Ivor’s music – have a look, it’s all on the music rest there.” I did not doubt her word of course, but explained the reason for my enquiry and then the lady said “Oh really? Well, he possibly just wants to show you the lilac tree. Come...” and she led me out through the French windows into the garden where a huge and wonderful tree of white lilac was in full bloom. Again, Ivor seemed to have proved his point!

It was not until 1972 that I was first invited to go and work in America, initially for a six-week tour. Giving some private sittings in New York City, I met a lady who subsequently sent in members of her family, and who felt the help received merited some kindly gesture in return. Adele Rasey Sardi invited my hosts and myself to be her guests at a show one evening, and then to supper at the family restaurant – a world famous gathering place in those days of many of the great film and theatre stars. Once again, Ivor had indicated before I left for America that he would take me to a place where he had enjoyed himself many years before. As we all do sometimes, dining and at the same time taking in the different features of a public eatery, I glanced at the large framed photographs of various stars which lined the walls and lo! – just a few yards from our table – was an autographed photo of Ivor from when he had himself been a guest there long before.

Always, when he gives me the impression that he is interested in what I am doing, and where, I ask that he gives me a firm proof and he well knows by now that this is the only way I shall continue to believe in his friendship, despite the countless proofs from over the years.

A year or so after this pleasure, I responded in a way unusual for me, when two very dignified people, who attended the London Spiritual Mission where I have served for some quarter-century – and where we shall be celebrating Ivor’s Centenary – invited me to visit their home in Putney, south-west London, to give private sittings to themselves and also to a close friend of theirs. Normally, people come to me – I never went out giving private consultations – but somehow felt this time I must agree.

On a Friday morning in my Chiswick home, I broke off deskwork to make a cup of coffee and glance at the morning newspaper, and suddenly Ivor’s presence filled the room. “I shall come with you next Tuesday

y'know" he told me, and in response to my request for further information, he simply said "Just believe me – I know you want proofs that I am here, even now. I say, wait until Tuesday and you will know I am there and have been there, too." With that he was gone.

For a moment, I had to pause to think of what I was due to be doing the following Tuesday. Then I realized it was my day for visiting Putney.

The three good people had their consultations – my hostess being the last of them – and I was then invited to stay on awhile to take afternoon tea with them, which I much appreciated. In their elegant lounge, I was invited to sit wherever I pleased and took a chair quite close to the fireside – a gilt Regency styled chair, beautifully upholstered. Towards the end of our meeting, during which I sensed strongly Ivor's presence, my hostess quite took me aback by saying "You know Donald, I have to tell you this. While you have been sitting there, you have kept on being overshadowed, quite unmistakably, by Ivor Novello, although I have no idea why he should be here!"

I explained briefly that I had had many communications from him over the years and that now I suddenly remembered he had told me the previous Friday that he 'would be coming with me on Tuesday'. "Oh" said the lady, "That is interesting. But I can think his only reason for choosing to come here is that I was the nurse called out to him the night he died." I realised during our sitting that the lady had done a lot of teaching in her life, and had once, for a period, been working as a nurse, but knew nothing else about her.

As we were speaking thus, the lady exclaimed, "Oh Donald – he has come again – he is leaning right over, laughing, and has put on a green velvet jacket and says will I tell you how much he likes this – he has one just like yours. Do you happen to have a green velvet coat?" Yes – only weeks before I had purchased a bottle green velvet evening jacket!

Driving home from this encounter, I was reliving the whole thing through in my mind, and then again felt strongly Ivor's presence and the thought put into my mind "I'm not going yet. I'm coming with you now to meet Arthur's friend. You'll like her – she's lovely." I hadn't a clue who he meant but was curious to see if the person I had arranged to see at my home at 6.30 p.m. would be a lady. But a friend of Arthur who?

I had barely twenty minutes in which to freshen up before my appointed sitter was due to arrive – a dark skinned lady whose booking had been made through my booking secretary, on the basis of a special favour, since normally I never made private appointments after five o'clock. At the time of the booking, she called and said simply that a great friend (not being named) from New York had insisted this sitter must make an appointment with me.

The lady was very fine – and now well known – actress named Cecily Tyson. Realising through the sitting her role in life, I now knew why Ivor was interested in being with us. She was quite delightful and, at the time, was nominated for an Oscar. Since then, the lady has gone on to great acclaim and other awards. It was only as she was about to leave that Cecily told me, “Oh, our friend, Arthur Mitchell, wished me to give you his love and greetings – it was he who insisted I come to see you and I am so glad I did.”

Like pieces of a jigsaw, other things now fitted into place to explain Ivor’s fuller interest in my work. Staying with dear friends in New Jersey the year previous, it was suggested in the last few minutes whilst waiting for lunch, that I might care to watch television which, at that time, was showing a chat programme in which a black skinned gentleman was being interviewed. He was a man with tremendous charisma (a word I always use with extremely careful choice). Apparently, he was the founder of the famous Harlem Dance Theatre – one of America’s greatest ballet companies – and as he expressed himself most eloquently and interestingly, I was suddenly aware of Ivor coming close and informing me “You’re going to meet him before long y’know. You’ll work for him, but it won’t be here. You’ll see, I’ll prove it.”

Many months later, home in London, a lady telephoned my booking secretary, Gee Sumeray, saying she had been asked to make an appointment for a gentleman, but would I please be patient if he happened to be a few minutes late as he was in London for only a brief visit and had so many things on his schedule that he might not be able to keep the strictest time with his appointments.

It was only towards the end of the appointment that something suddenly triggered in my mind and I realised this was the gentleman I had seen on the American television chat show months before. Arthur Mitchell, a wonderful choreographer and very special gentleman, was – from then on – to become a very dear friend, coming to see me whenever he could, sending members of his company and also hosting me to his shows whenever I visited New York. Once again, Ivor had proven his every word about Arthur and his friend.

There were many similar experiences prior to 1976 when it was to be the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ivo’s transition. The London Spiritual Mission’s Council had very kindly agreed to let me use the church for a very special evening, the proceeds from which would be donated to the Retired Actors’ Home at Twickenham, in Ivor’s memory.

Calling it simply ‘Salute to Ivor’, the idea had come to me several months before but the only person to know about it then was my beloved companion and booking secretary, Gee. Over twenty years of devoted

service to me, Gee regards – as I do – service to Spirit, her way of giving back to Them for the tremendous help she received through Spiritual Healing many years before we met. Planning for the Ivor event – 6th March, 1976 – Gee very generously said that, no matter what it cost, she would arrange for white lilac to be flown in from Jersey – or further afield if necessary – to decorate the church.

At that time in my life, I did not relate to friends generally, my several years of communications from Ivor, and even now, only with the advent of this small book, will the majority of them know of it for the very first time. Sharing a platform in the autumn of 1975 with my dear friend and excellent colleague Ivy Scott, I was surprised when, taking tea after the meeting, Ivy said, “Donald, I must tell you. On the platform you had Ivor Novello standing by you. His message was one I don’t understand, but perhaps you will, “Tell Don I am grateful for his plans for March and I will help him with them every way I can.” Yes, I understood this most encouraging message, but still said nothing to Ivy about it. Only at a later date was it to become public knowledge that the Ivor evening was set, and then only because, naturally, we had to advertise the sale of tickets.

To digress for a moment. Over twenty years earlier, during a visit to the Grand Theatre, Leeds, I had met several of Ivor’s stars who were touring with his show ‘King’s Rhapsody’ – a show I never tire of seeing – and amongst them, of course, was his much loved Olive Gilbert, the fine contralto, always having a major role in Ivor’s shows. Come January 1976, and Ivor came to me one evening to inform me that he was now about to keep his promise of long before – that I would meet Olive again – “Believe me, I shall prove it.”

Quite unexpectedly, Gee told me that a friend of hers whom I had met a few times before – Derek Sidney – had not only been an actor years ago but, being the tall, dark, handsome fellow he was, had for a time been an understudy to Barry Sinclair when the latter was starring in the roles Ivor had previously played. Many years had passed since I first met Barry Sinclair but when first ever meeting Derek Sidney, I was immediately struck by the extraordinary likeness. By the mid seventies, Derek had taken over a copy-print shop but I never knew where it was, other than being somewhere in London’s West End.

Now Gee was telling me that she had mentioned about the Ivor presentation to Derek, out of general interest, and Derek had generously said he would print our tickets as his gesture to this charitable evening and as his personal tribute to Ivor. Some days later, Derek telephoned me with this message: “Don, I don’t think you know that my shop is directly underneath the flat where Ivor lived in the Aldwych – we have a blue

plaque on the wall outside the shop – the wall between the shop door and the entrance to the flats above. Now you know that Olive Gilbert lives in the flat below what was Ivor's and we often have a chat as she comes in and out of the building. I saw her this morning, told her of the 'Salute to Ivor' and she wants you to go and have tea with her one afternoon."

Derek gave me the appropriate telephone number and insisted I make the call that evening because Olive was shortly to be going away for a few days. Welcomed warmly by Olive some three days later, I had mentally sent out thoughts, like prayers, to Ivor. "I hope you'll come with me this time", and had had no recognisable response. Perhaps it was foolish of me since, surely, it should be a foregone conclusion that he would come when, after all, he alone must have made this visit possible?

After some general social chatter, I reminded Olive of our meeting in Leeds many years previously and then she related aspects of it which I had forgotten. We very quickly relaxed together and from then on, remained dear friends for several years until she 'moved on' to join Ivor again. However, I did feel just a little uncomfortable as we were talking because I felt Ivor so very close but was unsure how Olive would react if I suddenly spoke about this. Being Welsh, she was of a strong Baptist background, and it could even have been offensive for her if I had started talking about the Spirit World and claiming Ivor's presence was now with us in her home. At that time I had no knowledge whatsoever that Olive had sometimes been a participant in the séances in Ivor's home long, long years before.

Anyway, alongside the chair in which I sat was the smallest piano I had ever seen and Ivor kept impressing me to reach out and touch it. I refused, but he said, "It IS mine you know, really – and remind her of it, please." Still very reluctant to open up to Olive in this way, I mentally insisted that Ivor give me something much more specific that I could not possibly know about. It was as if he were in a devilish mood, having jokes with us, for his response was to start singing the tune of 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' incessantly and then saying, "I shall stop only if you tell her about the piano. Do that and then I'll give you something else as well!"

In Olive's home was one lovely piece of jade – a beautiful ornament which had caught my eye the moment I entered the apartment. Somehow I felt it was alright to offer a compliment about this, and did so. "Ah yes" said Olive, "I often sense Ivor's presence around you know, and frequently he stands by the cabinet (the one on which the ornament stood). Of course, he was the real collector of jade you know, not me. We always brought him jade for anniversary presents and such like. Other things too, of course, but he loved the jade the most." I realised there was my cue – Olive KNEW Ivor could bring his presence into the

atmosphere, and so now I felt 'safe' in mentioning my experiences of that very time. Speaking about the piano and the song, I was surprised when Olive told me, "Yes, it was Ivor's piano. It is a ship's piano you know – they are very rarely to be seen nowadays. I bought it for him as a birthday gift years ago when we had been on a marvellous cruise and he had quite fallen for the ship's tiny piano. When he passed, it was one item he specifically decreed should come back to me." An interesting little story, but then to be followed with what was, at first, Ivor's mischief getting out of hand. Nevertheless, I had mentally promised him to follow through, provided he gave me more information. So perhaps the classic piece was, "Ask her about Mother Shipton...Oh, Ding, Dong, Bell, look who's down the well."

Now any true medium can relate stories of items 'coming through' which have seemed so ridiculous that, if repeated, they might be in fear of getting locked away! But one has always to remember that, what may seem silly to the medium, might be a classic piece of real 'evidence' to the sitter. We always have to remember too, that Spirit Friends remain, for a long time, much as they were on Earth, complete with sense of humour and all. 'Mother Shipton' and 'Ding Dong' was a bit too much thought I. Yet there was no way I could now be disloyal to Ivor. Thankfully, Olive – being a very perceptive and more than usually 'observant' person – quickly realised Ivor was 'up to something' for she asked me straight out, "What is it now then Don? He's playing funny games isn't he? I just know it, so come along..."

When I told her this piece of seeming jest from Ivor, Olive almost choked on her further sip of gin – her preference to my tea. She laughed most heartily and said, "Oh my goodness, yes. Mother Shipton and her damned well!" The story was that, over thirty years previously, whilst on tour with Ivor and performing in Yorkshire, they had gone one day with others from the cast to the beauty spot town of Knaresborough and there visited the famous Mother Shipton's Cave and its 'wishing well'. I know this place myself and can tell the reader that, in the corner of the ancient cave, this well has the lowest possible wall to prevent any incoming water getting into the well itself. To 'make a wish', people have to bend very low – almost kneeling on the ground – in order to dip a hand into the water and mentally form the wish. Olive had apparently tried to bend to do just this, but being fairly short of stature and very rotund, she had lost her balance and it was only Ivor's quick outreach of hand that prevented her falling completely into the well! Her hand had slipped into the water with such suddenness that it had splashed up and all over them.

To the layman, it might seem a nonsense that someone from a world of Spirit should make contact with such an apparently trivial memory, but it behoves one to remember that, (a) it is important for the Spirit

Communicator to get through with no-matter-how-unusual information that the medium cannot possibly have had previous knowledge of it, and (b) also it has to be shown that those on the Other Side still remember some of those things which have been amongst the highlights – in whatever degree – in their lives.

This was a most wonderful afternoon – like many more to follow in later years – but when Olive expressed her regret that she already had an appointment scheduled for the 6th March and would not be able to attend the ‘Salute’, Ivor told me, “Don’t be upset Don. I shall get her there, no matter how. I promise.” This I did not dare to mention in case Olive thought I was using a ruse now to persuade her into coming, although I would never do such a thing so offensive to Spirit Friends.

A week or two later, another show business friend working in a famous agent’s office, suggested I try and get some more of Ivor’s remaining earthly friends to come, and gave me the addresses of Lizabeth Webb (by then Lady Campbell), Vanessa Lee (married to actor Peter Graves) and Dunstan Hart – the glorious lead singer in many of Ivor’s shows, and whose son Nicholas I had met years previously at the College of Psychic Studies.

The latter two were unable to come because of previously arranged commitments, but Lady Campbell very kindly agreed to come along and bring friends. I then had a call from a dear lady – Helen Cadell – whose home happened to be directly opposite to the London Spiritual Mission. Olive Gilbert had told her about the ‘Salute’ and once again I was invited to tea to meet and discuss things connected with Ivor.

Helen was very gracious, relating to me many fascinating anecdotes, being not only a biographer of Ivor’s mother, Clara, but also having been her private secretary for some years. It became clear that Ivor had been putting in some excellent work ‘behind the scenes’, helping to bring this special event together. Helen brought a party of friends – among them Olive Gilbert! Bless her dear heart, Olive had decided at the last minute that she ‘could not bear to miss this special evening’ and so had cancelled her other engagement, feeling that by joining us, she would not be letting Ivor down. (I still never told her that he had assured me he would ‘get her there, no matter what’)

It was a truly glorious evening and Olive was rewarded with a standing ovation from the packed audience, which – it looked – had taken her totally by surprise. A few days later, having sent off the cheque for the proceeds to the Actors’ Home, I had a brief visit from Ivor informing me that he was so grateful for the immeasurable ‘Light’, the thoughts and appreciation of that audience, singers, musicians and mediums had given him. He would now ‘give me a very rare and special treat before the year

was out, but would have to work hard on it, so might not be around for a while’.

In other words – “You do your thing while I do mine!”

THE GLOBAL SPIRIT TRAVELLER

Some weeks following upon the Ivor Event in London, I was in Florida staying with some friends in Fort Lauderdale for six weeks, during which time we endeavoured to really relax at weekends and get away from everything to do with my work. However, one weekend they suggested that I might care to visit the long established Spiritualist Assembly in Northern Florida at Casadaga. Hearing about this extraordinary 'town' which was created as a place for Spiritualists to have their own homes, their own community, with meeting halls, social events, hotels, shops, etc., I had frequently wondered exactly what it would be like.

Over the years it had become somewhat run-down, yet there was a peaceful atmosphere all around, a beautiful setting with lakes and afforestation a-plenty, and after taking in the afternoon service in the main auditorium, it was decided that, before driving home, we would each visit one of the many mediums whose homes had boards outside indicating that they were available for private sittings.

It has been said many times that Britain has the best mediums, and maybe this is true – I wouldn't like to so generalize – but it does not mean that there are no really fine mediums in America and elsewhere around the globe. Opting to have a half hour sitting with a lady called June Kennedy, I was very impressed indeed. Apart from some small but to-the-point pieces of evidence of my own family and friends in Spirit, the Reverend Kennedy then described a very tall, handsome man, "Somewhere about sixty perhaps when he 'died'" and stated that he held in his hand a piece of musical script but which appeared to be unfinished. The medium then told me that she thought the name to be Ivan and that this man could well have been quite famous for she saw many 'star lights' around him. I said I was fairly sure I knew whom she was describing, and then came, "Are you going to the islands from here? Like the West Indies or such like? (No!) Oh but this gentleman says you are and he is laughing. He says, "You don't know it yet, but you will be going to one of my favourite places - the West Indies – but not just yet. Not this time. But you'll see I have kept my promise, in time"."

1976 was an extremely busy year for me, with all the public and private work at home, planning seminars and suchlike, plus I had also several working visits abroad amongst my commitments – including a further visit to Florida at the very end of the year. Friend and colleague Stanley Cameron telephoned the evening before I was due to fly out and, following upon some general conversation, he suddenly described to me a Spirit Gentleman standing with him – this proving to be an uncle of mine – and then gave some details of what would be ahead during my trip, all

this proving exactly correct in their due time even though I had not the remotest idea of what could be their meaning when Stanley gave them to me. He finally added that another Spirit Gentleman was laughing and saying that I would be going a good bit further than I thought I would – some place I had never been before and he was behind the planning for this.

In the last week of my autumn visit to Texas, Louisiana and Florida, a dear friend in Miami informed me that he was to escort me for a week in Jamaica! Protesting at first that I could not possibly do this, I was persuaded that, as I had kept a free diary for two weeks after my home coming, then only conducting a carol service on the Sunday prior to Christmas, I could afford this extra time.

Neil had sent several of his friends to me in the past for sittings and it was some of these people, valuing the Spirit assistance they had had at different levels, who had persuaded Neil to accompany me for a good period of relaxation before flying home to Britain. Staying principally in Montego Bay, I had picked up a tourist's pamphlet that described, as usual, the many beauty spots and places of special interest, and also described the way to some houses of famous people who had made holiday homes there – including Ivor!

This was particularly touching for me because firstly, I remembered now his many communications of earlier date, especially those relating to taking me to one of his favourite places and needing to work out this plan very carefully; and secondly, this was the home he so adored and where he took his last holiday only weeks before he left the physical world.

In Canada, the following year, a medium I had met only socially, drew me aside from other company to tell me she felt she must describe to me a young lady and an older gentleman who had been standing by me during the evening. Giving correctly the name of Sylvia, the medium described perfectly a young lady friend of mine who had taken her Transition very suddenly, through pneumonia, in 1948 at the age of nineteen. Then she described Ivor equally well and said that he was joking and saying, "You see, I keep my fans even when I come to this World!" At the time, it seemed only a joke, but much later, thinking back on this, I recalled that it was Sylvia who, in our early teenage years, had persuaded me that I really must see a show at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, which she had already seen in company with her parents. This was my first experience of Ivor's super stagecraft but, even then, he himself was not starring, but Mr. Barry Sinclair instead.

The Canadian medium then commented that Ivor seemed to love joking, for he was also saying, "Following you (meaning me) is like being back on tour all over again – it's time we had a longer spell at home I think!" How right!

Invariably Ivor would come to let me know – prior to some long distance travel – that he would be ‘taking an interest’ and at one time he joked that he was glad I was the one always having to pack bags, he had no need to and also he could travel ‘free’ now. Proving his point again, whilst participating in a large seminar at Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania that summer, a lady – who was a total stranger – suddenly approached me and gave me a single red rose together with a copy from a magazine she had recently been reading.

Informing me that she thought this magazine article might interest me, she had just felt ‘an urge’ to also bring me the red rose. There was no doubt in my mind as to where her ‘urge’ had come from, for the article was about musical shows through the years, with particular reference to those of Ivor Novello!

A similar thing happened some years later when, again at an American seminar, an elderly lady produced a page from a magazine, thinking my interest in it would be its reference to a lady having a sitting with Mrs. Ena Twigg, a famous British medium for many years. My real interest, however, was in the fact that part of this reported sitting was of Ivor’s participation in it – more important to me even than the fact that I knew Mrs. Twigg very well.

In the early autumn of 1977 I had a telephone call from Mr. Gordon Higginson, President of the Spiritualists National Union in Britain, with whom I was scheduled to share mediumistic demonstrations at a Remembrance Weekend Service at a large Town Hall in the Midlands. Apart from Gordon and I, there was also due to be a Guest Speaker to give a spiritual address, and this man had suddenly cancelled – due to illness I believe. Gordon was unable at such short notice to get a suitable ‘name’ to take the man’s place, and asked if I could find someone will, and available, to fill the breach. My very treasured friend, Sir John Sinclair – one of the finest speakers on all aspects of metaphysical and holistic matters – kindly agreed to travel to the Midlands with me, and Gordon was delighted.

Crossing London to collect John, and with Sunday morning traffic very quiet, I was very surprised when I suddenly felt a very definite change in the atmosphere within my car, and then I heard Ivor saying, “Is there room for me too?” Even were he still physical, there would have been plenty of room but, nevertheless, it was clear Ivor wanted once again to prove his closeness and his encouragement. Journeying north, I happened to mention to John, in a joking way, that we also had a third passenger – Ivor – and, for the first time in all our long years of friendship, John related a story similar to my own. When a youth, having friends who had known Ivor well and spoke highly of him as a very real

humanitarian, as well as a great theatrical star, John had been promised a meeting with him. It transpired that this was about the same time as my originally planned meeting in 1951 had been arranged, and John also had the disappointment of not making it, tinged with the great sadness of Ivor's sudden physical passing.

Following John's superb Address, Gordon and I did our work and when the packed meeting closed, the stage curtains were drawn. But instead of immediately leaving the stage, Gordon paused and then sat at the grand piano where he began to play some Ivor Novello songs. He is a beautiful pianist and the music was just delightful. Again – Ivor had proved his point, for when I asked Gordon why he had chosen to play like that, he simply said, "I don't really know. I suppose it was because it has been a good meeting and I just felt suddenly impressed to play some nice music."

I so often wish the general public would realise that Spirit communication has NEVER been confined simply to séance rooms and meeting halls. In this small volume it must be seen all through, that Ivor – like scores of other Spirit Friends to all people – most often works at his best to prove the reality of his ongoingness, when doing so quite spontaneously.

It was around this time that London medium Lee Lacy, whom I had met just twice previously at that stage, afforded me a real surprise through the post one morning. I knew nothing whatsoever of Lee's life and background, only that he was a professional colleague working much in the same way as myself. His letter, however, explained that, over many years, he had also taken as a hobby the collection and dealing in old theatrical memorabilia – programmes, photographs, early musical scores, theatre magazines, etc., and on going through a large collection he had found some early photographs of Ivor which he now wished me to accept with his good wishes. For once, Ivor had given me no prior notice of this and it appears that it was only through Lee having heard of the 'Salute to Ivor' the previous year that he took to the idea of letting me have the Ivor pictures, which of course I have valued ever since.

Presenting a series of meetings again in Canada and America in early 1978, I was once more approached by a lady who had emigrated from England many years before and who was a keen gardener, and she presented me with an article taken from a journal on gardening matters which she regularly took. This lady could not possibly have known anything of my 'connection' with Ivor when she casually said, "For some reason, I cut this article out, knowing I had to bring it for you. Perhaps you're a keen gardener like myself?" I had to disappoint her in this assumption but added that I dearly wished I had the time to be.

The article was on a species of tree – now extremely rare – and of the very few left in Britain, one of the finest being in the garden of Ivor Novello’s old home, Redroofs! I wonder what REALLY made this lady ‘know’ she had to bring it to me? No prizes for guessing!

It was in the same year my brother-in-law passed very suddenly into Spirit and the Influencing Minds with whom I regularly work had told me that my mother would be joining them by the 28th November of that same year, and consequently I must not be arranging autumn tours abroad. I was given every assurance that my mother would not suffer, but would pass quickly and quietly after no more than four days of some sickness. This was exactly what happened on the 26th November 1978! In the meantime however, Ivor had made periodic ‘visits’ and, in the course of one such visit, he told me that, knowing I was as close to my mother as he had been to his, he would see that mother had plenty of his music, light and soothing and which he knew she loved, to welcome her into his World.

First seeing one of Britain’s finest modern mediums, Stewart Lawson, giving a big demonstration in the North around about 1966, I never actually met him until 1970 in London, and then not again until some years later – from which point we worked together fairly frequently. In mid-December 1978 I had occasion to visit an old friend on the South Coast – an annual outing primarily for me to deliver Christmas gifts – and at this time I wrote to Stewart suggesting that, as he lived not far from where I was going, we might meet up for lunch, this being on my way back North on the second day of my visiting. We had a most enjoyable talk over lunch, but beforehand Stewart had suggested, voluntarily, that we just sit quietly together in the small sanctuary where he always did his own work.

Now, at this point, Stewart knew nothing of my mother, or of her passing two weeks before. Describing my father, then my brother-in-law, and giving excellent evidence concerning them both, Stewart referred to some other relatives and friends long since ‘gone’, and then paused, puzzled momentarily, but going on to say there was a lady coming in – with Ivor Novello – and the latter was telling him the lady was my mother. Stewart was baffled because he was personally sure my mother was still in the physical world. Following upon excellent evidential details from mother, Stewart correctly said that she had been very touched by her funeral service and the fact that friends were there from America, India and Brazil! Perfectly correct.

The Ivor connection seemed to puzzle Stewart even more, however, but we eventually got it sorted out sufficiently for Stewart to feel free with his flow, and then he told me, “Ivor says something about he often

watches me (Stewart) when I go abroad, and that you also will be going to where he and I have both been. Wait and see..." I knew that every year Stewart left Britain immediately after Christmas to spend three months working in South Africa where the climate suited his health infinitely better than back home. Yet I could not envisage myself ever going to South Africa. During our lunch later, Stewart told me – to my utter amazement – that for some years he had been a member of the corps de ballet in Ivor's shows, and so was his (then) wife, Iris. In fact it was during their time working together that they had married. In ways similar to myself, Stewart had – for a long time in his youth – endeavoured to at least 'cool off', if not altogether 'kill off', his natural mediumship, but finally decided he must let it flow, and that he must give up show business to concentrate on his work instead.

Although, as I have related, he and I worked together considerably after this, it was not until I actually visited and stayed with him, and worked at his new Psychic Centre in Cape Town in 1985, that Stewart told me more of his theatrical connections and also of his communications from Ivor since the latter's passing. Stewart emigrated in 1983 and it was a great loss to the Spiritualist Movement in Britain, but he was certainly doing wonderful work through his new Centre abroad, where it was equally badly needed as ever it had been here in Britain. Referring during social conversation one day to the famous medium Alex Harris, in South Africa, Stewart told me how privileged he had been when once visiting this great medium's materialization séances. Ivor had come to Stewart in one such meeting, appearing as solid as any physical form in the room, apparently aware that Stewart had always troubled himself somewhat about deserting the theatre. Ivor had simply said, "Look at it a different way – see yourself now as playing with an ethereal instead of physical cast. That really is the only difference." To the experienced Spiritualist this will show itself a very apt observation, since we have to prove all the time that as "all the world's a stage and the men and women merely players", the Spirit People are still as much a part of the cast as the rest of us.

THE UNSEEN GATECRASHER

It was also in the early 1980s that I met North Country medium Jill Harland, and shortly afterwards invited her to be one of the team of speakers lined up for my seminars later in the year. Jill had been a singer for many years, touring Britain and abroad with several of the great big-band shows we used to enjoy, but now she gave her time to furthering her gift of mediumship.

It was during our second meeting when Jill suddenly expressed the strong feeling of Ivor Novello's presence around me and this led to my relating some of my past experiences shared with him. What I did not relate – and Jill was never to know – was that twice in the past colleagues had described Ivor showing a small silver box that they had taken to be a purely ornamental thing. In neither case was the medium sure if this had actually been some treasure of Ivor's or whether he was endeavouring to indicate an awareness of some gift that might be coming to me.

A couple of years after our first acquaintance, Jill telephoned me one day and said she had been out in Morecambe where she had met a couple of old friends she had not seen for a very long time – two ladies who had been almost life long friends of Ivor. "I've told them about you and your interest in Ivor" Jill said, "and they have said that whenever you are across this side of the country, and if I am at home, they would like me to take you to meet them."

Quite some months later I did have occasion to travel in that direction, so I took Jill out for lunch and then we visited the two lovely elderly ladies – Netta and Zena Ferranini – who had known Ivor since they were small girls. They had adored him and, from many things they told me, he clearly had loved them very dearly. They showed me photographs and also cuttings relating to Ivor, and told how they had been specially invited to his funeral, just as they had for all his opening nights of new shows. The two ladies had worked at the Winter Gardens Theatre, Morecambe, for most of their lives and knew many of the great stars of the stage. So it was altogether a fascinating afternoon. Not until a year or so later were we able to meet again, and on this occasion they quite suddenly had the idea to show me – and put in my hand – a small, square silver cigarette box, quite heavy and most beautifully crafted. "Open it" they invited. Inside were about half a dozen old cigarettes – the last Ivor ever had in this box. I was then told that this had always been at his bedside, and he had smoked a cigarette from it just minutes before he died, indicating that this was the very last personal article he had touched. At last I understood the mediums description of the silver box, and the gift – for me – was in being able to handle it and admire it anyway.

Later in the eighties, a new lady attended one of our seminars, this one being at Horncastle College, Lincolnshire. During our evening of music and clairvoyance, I had asked our regular singer-friend, Gwen Byrne, to please sing some lovely Ivor Novello songs - which she gladly did. These included 'Some Day my Heart will Awake', from 'King's Rhapsody', sung in the show by the superb Vanessa Lee, who Ivor had taken and made into a real star performer. Following our presentation, the new attendee came up to Gwen and myself, saying how thrilled she had been with the musical selection and Gwen's rendering of this particular song, announcing then that she was Vanessa's aunt! Exactly why I had asked Gwen solely for Ivor's music on that occasion, I knew not. Suffice that I did and it gave extra special pleasure to one particular lady. Maybe Ivor intended it that way, just for her? Who knows?

Through the years it seems a custom has developed between Ivor and myself because, where I have said earlier that, on his anniversaries I usually place a red rose or red carnation in a small vase, just for Ivor, he too never lets an anniversary of mine go by without 'arranging' something almost the same. Indeed it was the day before my birthday this year - 1992 - when I learned from Georgina Brazier-Potter that I was to be one of the benefactors in her giving out white rose bushes to a selected few. It has now arrived and is safely planted outside my cottage.

At the time around my sixtieth birthday however, in 1989, I had been asked to fly up to Scotland to conduct the wedding ceremony for friends who had both been married previously and now wanted a lovely wedding, but which would not be held in church. Ivor had previously come close and teased me about 'going all Scottish' and I had not known what he meant. But he did add that there was to be a wedding, very different from any I had either attended, or conducted, before. This was some time before I was invited by Jim and Moira to be their Officiant.

Late in the evening of the 18th October I was checking that I had everything to hand for my journey north when, quite suddenly, the whole room seemed to light up - and there was Ivor, large as life, as the saying goes, informing me that he was coming to the wedding also, "Whether I'm invited or not! Though, in a funny way, I think I have been." Then going on to add with a laugh, "But you can have my share of the marzipan" - an obvious reference to the wedding cake, and also implying that he knew well enough of my weakness for this particular confection.

Despite over forty years serious work and study of the ways of Spirit, I still never take them for granted, or that I shall carry on seeing and hearing them even tomorrow, let alone for years yet ahead. On this occasion though, I accepted Ivor's latest 'call' in a very casual way,

taking it as the norm since friends of his, years ago, told me how much he always enjoyed a good party. He must have picked up my thought pattern here, for suddenly he was of changed mood, saying, “Alright – I’ll prove it! Oh, will I prove it... you’ll be sorry you challenged me this time.” SO...

Thursday morning – 19th October – I switched on early morning radio to hear the weather forecast, but firstly it was playing Ivor’s music. An hour later, the post came bearing one letter telling me of a friend’s visit to a very well produced local amateur operatic society’s production of Ivor’s ‘Dancing Years’ which she had attended, and also a letter from a friend in Leeds enclosing an interesting article from the quarterly journal ‘Evergreen’. Featuring a photograph of Ivor with his parents, and being about his life’s work, the article was called ‘Evergreen Melodies’.

Before lunchtime I had occasion to telephone my sister in Leeds and in the background, during our conversation, I could hear her kitchen radio playing a selection of Ivor’s music. Later, reading a newspaper on the afternoon flight to Edinburgh, again Ivor was in my mind as I read an article about his old house, Redroofs. To my astonishment, being driven from the airport out town by the bride-to-be, her car radio had been switched on and as I stepped in, there once more was Ivor’s music.

Thinking that ‘one can have too much of a good thing, even a thing as good as Ivor’s music, and his friendship from Spirit’, I made no comment to Moira with any reference to Ivor or the music. Arriving at Jim’s home to take early supper with him and Moira, I was taken aback when, upon walking into the drawing room first, the background music playing was all Ivor’s. I merely remarked that it was nice music, at just the right volume on a music centre of superb tonal quality. “Oh”, remarked Jim, “I often play Ivor’s music – both recorded and at the piano. In fact, if you look you’ll see it’s all there on the piano now – and sometimes I feel him close and get ideas from him. I don’t know just why, but he asked me to give you something upon your arrival...just a minute.” Off to the kitchen he went, returning with a bottle of wine and saying, “This is a very rare wine and I’ve been lucky enough to get just half a dozen bottles which are really special. Ivor wants you to have this one with his good wishes.” The wine was in a blue bottle – something I had never ever seen before – and of course, whilst it was nice to have the good wishes, Jim and Moira had no inkling that my birthday was to be three days later. Furthermore, they had never been to my home so knew not that I have a collection of old blue glass!

The wedding was to take place on a large boat on the canals in the lovely countryside outside Edinburgh. Normally a restaurant, it had been exquisitely transformed into a chapel for the ceremony and, naturally being in attendance long before the bridal pair were due, I was again

reminded of Ivor's message that "I'll prove it to you...Oh! I'll prove it – you'll be sorry you challenged me this time..." The organist was playing a selection of all Ivor's most famous melodies prior to the ceremony's commencement.

Following the ceremony, a party of about sixty of us repaired to the hotel on the dockside, taking aperitifs while – within three quarters of an hour – the 'chapel' was miraculously transformed back into a restaurant. The wedding breakfast was served as we all lazily glided along canals on the most perfect autumn afternoon, and when the meal was over there was dancing and singing – needless to say with a lot more of Ivor's songs.

After being driven to the airport, I boarded the evening flight for home ground and was immediately struck by the fact that – while the boarding took place – the 'musak' playing in the background was Ivor's. I ALMOST began to wish I might never have to listen to it again!

Driving from the airport to home a couple of hours later, I switched on the car radio and the programme 'Friday Night is Music Night' was just coming to its end, the announcer informing listeners that "to complete this week's programme, we are going to enjoy a selection of Ivor Novello melodies".

Placing the bottle of wine in my refrigerator – which, I have to say, is where it remains to this day! – I quickly washed and changed and took to my bed, reading then for a short while before taking to sleep. About to put my head on the pillow, I sent out the thought, "Ivor, it has been a glorious day, but now you've had your fun and I hope you enjoyed it too", to which came the very quick response, "Oh – but I haven't finished yet! This is an important weekend – I was fifty once you know, it's a lovely age to be – and so is sixty – and one has to do something special to celebrate...and so I am!" I laughed and drifted into sleep after saying prayers.

The following day, having an unusually free weekend, and deciding to enjoy it at a leisurely pace for a change, I went browsing around some local second-hand bric-a-brac shops. Entering the first one, my eyes were immediately drawn to a large pile of old long-play records, the one on top being 'Ivor Novello and his Greatest Songs' in the same lilac covered sleeve as my own copy at home. After visiting a couple more shops, I stopped at a small café for a little light refreshment and there – believe it or not – the background music again was Ivor's. I drove on to another small local town and did some more browsing. I could hardly believe my ears when I walked into a second-hand bookshop at the very moment when an elderly was asking of the shopkeeper, "I wonder, do you have a second-hand copy of any biography on Ivor Novello?"

Sunday, 22nd October, and Sunday supposedly being ‘the day of rest’ I presumed this was likewise in the World of Spirit (although, of course, I really knew better) for it seemed now that Ivor had had his little game with me and perhaps, in the process, had worn out his energy flow in his determination to put down my challenge of days before. What a foolish presumption of mine!

In the evening as I sat quietly by the fireside sorting through some professional papers, many to be cleared out, I was startled by a sudden rather heavy thud across the room and, turning my head, I was somewhat stunned because, with so many books, every shelf has them packed very tightly and yet this one had ‘somehow’ slipped out while none of its neighbours was in the slightest bit disturbed. The book was ‘Ivor – The Story of an Achievement’ by W. McQueen Pope – perhaps the finest book ever written about Ivor! Clearly here was an indication that Ivor was having anything but ‘a day of rest’ and was not about to let me off the hook as simply as I had been believing.

A short while later, my friend Gwen Byrne telephoned to tell me she had been given a copy of the very last song Ivor wrote and would I like her to send me a photocopy thereof, which I was naturally to be most grateful for. Our brief conversation ended, I replaced the telephone receiver only to have it immediately ring again – this time it was my friend Jean wanting to know if I would care to have a ticket and join a party of hers for a special Sunday night concert which was to consist solely of Novello music. Sadly it was to coincide with an evening when I had a professional commitment so I had to decline.

With four days of being almost ‘haunted’ by Ivor (perhaps now, in return, challenging – if only my patience) I almost dreaded the following day – my birthday. However, it was all very enjoyable really, and on the morn of my sixtieth anniversary, I received one greeting card enclosing a newspaper article about Ivor; another friend, Margaret Brown (with whom I occasionally exchange music-conversation-and-joke cassettes) had sent a greeting and a tape on which was Ivor’s music, and mid-morning my lovely next door neighbour, Laura, brought me a small spray of red roses.

Altogether, this series of events proved once again that, if the Spirit People are really determined to guide us towards some particular experience, they will ‘pull out all the stops’ to bring it into reality.

Let me state here, however, that I am disdainful of those who can be so gullible as to try and translate every minute happening in their lives into ‘Spirit activity’. Years of experience teach one well how to define what is, and what is not, of Spirit intent and I watch this fine line of assessment with such caution that indeed many friends berate me for being rather cynical at times.

In discussion of spiritualistic matters, those having no experience to draw upon will often suggest that, being highly sceptical, they probably would never receive any form of proof of survival from a medium if they enquired. What is not realised is that the Spirit People fully respect any honest and intelligent scepticism and they do not appreciate very much the over-emotional and gullible. Theirs IS a world of great intelligence and they are ever keen to demonstrate that it is not some separate entity – like separate countries – but exists ‘within the everywhere’. A great many people are very sensitive to Spirit without even recognising it themselves. They will make many decisions, receive many ‘sudden knowings’ of when to do, or not to do something – and yet they never realise just who, or what, is the force behind it.

In working mediumship however, one has to be very careful not to allow an over-scepticism of one’s own to creep into the flow of impressions one is receiving for a sitter. It is necessary to remember that sometimes what may appear to be an outlandish expression of Spirit as far as the medium is concerned, may in fact be a very essential part of the proving evidence to the sitter of their communicator’s genuineness.

Ivor was by no means gullible himself, and I know that he respects my areas of scepticism, otherwise I would not always have asked him to ‘prove himself’. Remembering that all his shows have quite breathtaking transformation scenes which, in their day, were quite ingenious in their effects, it is not surprising that that same originality of mind – always looking for the unusual twist or effect – is still there. Hence, some of the curious ways in which he works to convey the reality of his presence.

In the spring of this year – 1992 – a lady came to me for a private appointment and, as far as I was aware, we had never met before. The sitting went well and then came a point at which I was puzzled. I kept hearing the name ‘Ivor’ being called, and then remembered that, on coming in, the lady had brought me three red roses. With this springing back to mind, I ASSUMED somehow Ivor was behind this and so asked the lady if she had any connections with Mr. Novello. No, replied the lady, she had always known of – and quite liked – his music of course, but that was all. Yet there was a constant flow of music around me, before I was the one to have the biggest shock in consequence of this. In a momentary flash of objective – rather than subjective – clairvoyance, I saw a personal friend, Ivor Willard, literally ‘come through the door’ saying, “No – it’s me, you fool Don. It’s me...” Naturally I had to ask the lady if she had ever known Ivor Willard, to which she replied affirmatively. From then on we had a very happy communication from our mutual friend Ivor, and he explained also that the three roses represented himself, the ‘other’ Ivor and me! He assured us he had adjusted extremely well and happily now to his new life since his passing

almost twelve months before, and told how Ivor Novello had helped him greatly in the process. “Our common bond of music was the link”, he said, thus reminding us that, although during the last of his forty-one years Ivor had been curator of a museum in London, he had also earlier been a music teacher. Between them, the two Ivor’s, each with an equally great sense of humour, had worked very well to bring the proofs of their friendship through in a most extraordinary way.

Before leaving, the young lady told me that the only reason she had booked the appointment was because she had been so impressed with the funeral service I had conducted for Ivor Willard in May 1991 that somehow it helped convince her “There MUST be something real to this claim of Spirit Life.” The roses she had simply felt strongly urged to bring, but not really knowing why.

In drawing this short manuscript to a close, I had sent out thoughts to Ivor (Novello) as to what sort of finale he might prefer and a short while ago he came back to ask that I don’t finish it talking just about him. “I’m not the only one in Spirit, as you know, so let’s give it a finish that offers to all people – above all else – HOPE.

“Tell them, Donald, in case they wonder, that I do not spend all my time working with earthly minds, although I enjoy it wholeheartedly whenever I find I am able to give real help and inspiration. After leaving the earth plane I was made aware that so many people remarked on the sadness of my talent now being finished, and just in middle age. They have said the same thing about countless entertainers and other people who have come over in their early and middle years of life. But my talent has NOT been ended, not even diminished. Neither has that of anyone else coming here.

“Try to persuade people to go beyond that sort of thinking, Donald. Try to get it across, loud and clear, that all our talents and abilities move onward with us and we learn what ever are the best ways to utilise them here, in making our own progressions, at the same time as utilising them to help earthly minds that can respond to our inspiration where, because of common abilities and expertise, we can strike a certain bond.

“Especially do I want it to be realised that when young life finishes in its earthly state, it is totally wrong for people to think that all of youth’s training – in whatever gifts and abilities – is all wasted. Far from it. Parents dwell upon the sorrow of their young, having had so much care and help to grow and to develop their potential, then to see it all – apparently – washed away by earthly death. It is not ‘washed away’ except towards a distant shore where, upon surfacing, it takes on new vibrancy and can be used in a great variety of ways, many of which –

even if we attempted to describe them – would hardly be understood by earthly minds.

“The consciousness expands beyond belief here and therefore does the personality open up its fuller potential far more quickly than in the earthly sense. Whilst there is no physical growth, there is a richer maturing of the soul, one could say geared almost to the same rate as physical growth – and ‘ageing’ – would have taken place on earth.”

People who knew Ivor very closely have told me years ago of his great kindness to many who were on hard times, but mostly have spoken of his totally disarming modesty. While fully cognisant of the fact of being at the top of the theatrical tree, he never lost that modesty which allowed him to be equally comfortable whether addressing prince or pauper.

Probably this allows for his request to finish the story now on a broader line than that of Ivor’s communications alone.

“I want it known that all here do try to communicate their reality back to earth, but some find it more difficult than others. Remember, I had much experience with the Spirit Loved Ones long before I came to join them. Yet, if I had tried to put this Truth into a show, it would still have been regarded as no more than fiction.

“What a shame – for such a glorious fact!”

POST SCRIPT

The foregoing was completed two days before I was due, once again, to fly to America. The evening before leaving home, I was impressed by Ivor's presence telling me with a laugh that he "would be coming too, and would enjoy travelling free!"

As usual, I responded with the request that he find some way of proving it and, showing me a white rose, he said simply, "Watch for this! Where this is I shall be also". This intrigued me as I had only that day planted the white rose bush – my gift from Miss Brazier-Potter.

It was after nine o'clock in the evening – and dark – when my American hosts warmly welcomed me into their Allentown, Pennsylvania home. Walking out of the house with my hostess late the following morning, I happened to glance back at the building as we made our way to her car, and then I noticed only one flower – a white rose – blooming up against the wall. I am not sure whether or not I was surprised at being told, "Oh, that certainly wasn't there yesterday, the roses were all finished weeks ago – or so we thought!"

Having a few minutes quietude before retiring to bed that evening, I sent out a thought of thanks to Ivor for what I considered was his honouring of our usual sort of understanding. Immediately I was assured he would also prove he would still be close when I moved on to Harrisburg in ten days time.

A few days into this second stage of my tour, I was invited to take dinner in the new home of a dear friend whose artistry – and her art gallery – has flourished wonderfully through Spirit Guidance in recent years. Relaxing after dinner in the peaceful atmosphere of her beautifully tasteful home, my hostess suddenly invited my patience whilst she described a gentleman standing by my chair who, she said, had been some kind of writer when in the physical world. Her description of Ivor was perfect and the accompanying message very clear for me to understand.

Overall, this record attempts to show that, in the Spiritual Realms beyond our physical world there is undoubtedly a more refined quality of perception allowing the Spirit Friends to see potential realities of our world before they become our realities.

Ivor Novello has unquestionably proven time and again that he is one who has mastered the art of how to use that finer perception – and continues doing so to good and honourable purpose.

DON GALLOWAY
November 1992